

The Global **NEW LIGHT** of MYANMAR



The Hteekhee trade post on the Myanmar-Thai border.

Myanmar-Thailand border trade tops US\$4.1 bln in 11 months

The figures plunged from \$4.99 billion year on year, showing a sharp drop of \$857.145 million.

MYANMAR'S border trade with the neighbouring country Thailand totalled US\$4.136 billion in the past 11 months (April-March) of the current financial year 2023-2024.

The figures plunged from \$4.99 billion recorded in the year-ago period, showing a sharp drop of \$857.145

million.

Myanmar conducts cross-border trade with Thailand via Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Hteekhee and Mawtaung. Of them, the Hteekhee border performed the most extensive trade worth \$2.5 billion in the past 11 months.

Moreover, the trade values stood

at \$1.097 billion at the Myawady border, \$150.597 million at Tachilek, \$132.668 million at Myeik, \$199.131 million at Kawthoung and \$21.6 million at Mawtaung.

Myanmar conducts border trade with neighbouring countries such as China, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India. It exports agricultural produce, livestock products, fisheries, minerals, forest products, finished industrial goods, and other goods, while it brings in capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer goods, and raw materials from the CMP enterprises.

— NN/EM

Myanmar bamboo industry needs more artisans for global competition

FOR Myanmar's bamboo products to penetrate the overseas markets, more bamboo artisans are necessary. Currently, there are just a few training sessions on bamboo craftwork, according to bamboo growers and producers.

"Bamboo products have become fairly widespread worldwide. In EU countries, Malaysian-made bamboo products have gained popularity. We can't expand this industry yet," said an official from Myanmar Bamboo Society.

Networking needs to be expanded to compete in the global market, and the authorities also need to encourage the business, she said.

"If we are capable of mass production, we can compete in the international market. Training on bamboo handicrafts has been conducted occasionally in our country, but too few. We need support to compete in the international market. Bamboo production has been still weak in the local market.



Some bamboo products seen being displayed at the shop.

Some trainers can foster new skilled bamboo handicraft workers. But we should hire international experts, if necessary, from our neighbours such as China and Thailand. Indonesia is an expert in making detailed bamboo handiworks," she said.

More training and proper bamboo conservation are needed to expand the bamboo handicraft industry in Myanmar.

"Our bamboo society is able to work depending on support. Instead of selling bamboo in its raw stage, we want to help the country earn more income by making bamboo into value-added products. Training should be provided. We need to grow bamboo ourselves because if we cut bamboo, the forest will be depleted, and we can't get the quality we want," the official elaborated. — Thit Taw/ZS

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Bangladesh prepares rice deal with MRF in strategic move

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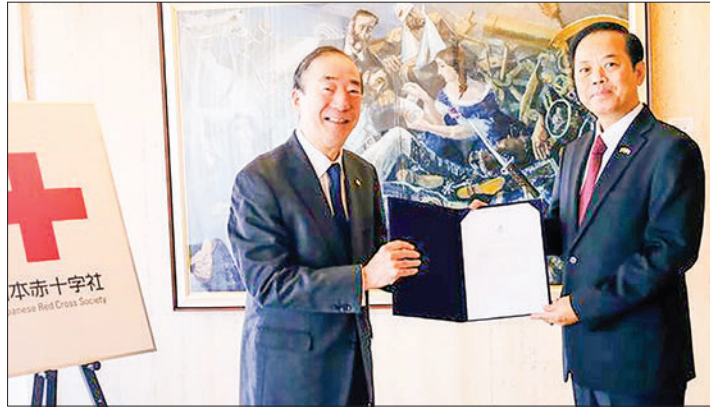
Dolphins captured near Kyakan beach in Hainggyikyun released back into sea

NATIONAL

Objectives of 79th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day 2024

- (A) To safeguard the State with the sacrifice of life by upholding Our Three Main National Causes: Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty as the national policy of Tatmadaw;
- (B) To actively participate in implementing the processes of two national visions of the State: the prosperity of the country and food security by Tatmadaw members together with the government and ethnic people in their respective sectors;
- (C) To steadfastly implement enhancement of three capabilities in accord with the work process of Tatmadaw, such as study, practise and obey in building a modern patriotic Tatmadaw with powerful strength and sharpening prowess;
- (D) To provide necessary assistance to hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election by Tatmadaw to ensure peace and stability, solidarity and development, which are actual needs of the State and to emerge a Union based on democratic and federal systems.

Myanmar donates 14.942M yen to Japan's Red Cross for Ishikawa quake relief efforts



Myanmar Ambassador to Japan U Soe Han presents the donation to Japan's Red Cross Society Chairman Mr Atsushi Seik.

ON 11 March, the Myanmar government made a monetary donation of 14.942 million yen (US\$100,000) to the Japanese

Red Cross Society for the rehabilitation of earthquake-hit Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, as reported by the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

U Soe Han, Myanmar's ambassador to Japan, presented the Myanmar government's donation to Mr Atsushi Seike, Chairman of the Japanese Red Cross Society, who expressed gratitude and handed a letter of appreciation to the ambassador.

The earthquake, with a magnitude of 7.6, struck Ishikawa Prefecture on New Year's Day. – ASH/NT

Legendary singer Daw Yi Yi Khin celebrates her 75th birthday



The photo shows the 75th birthday celebration of classical singer Daw Yi Yi Khin (L).

THE 75th birthday of legendary singer Daw Yi Yi Khin was held on the morning of 12 March at M3 Restaurant in Bahan Township, Yangon Region, according to the singer.

Artistes from the fields of music, film and literature attended the birthday celebration and invited vocalists to sing Daw Yi Yi Khin's famous song to honour the septuagenarian singer.

Artistes such as Academy Swe Zin Htike, Htar, A1 Tin Tin Hla, May Thet Htar Swe, Than Myat Soe, Nang Kyawk Kalyar, and pianist Ngwe Soe also attended the birthday party and joined in slicing the birthday cake to celebrate singer Daw Yi Yi Khin's 75th birthday.

"I feel pleased because I was honoured with a ceremony to mark my birthday. Dr Nila Thein, an ophthalmologist, is taking care of me while providing medical treatment. I am thrilled. I grew up enjoying music, so I believe that singing in the past will help me live longer. If you hear the sound of music, you might even say that it can contribute to a longer life," said the country's famous classical singer, Daw Yi Yi Khin.

Legendary singer Daw Yi Yi Khin has been on the music stage since she was 14 years old, performing songs composed by the music master Bo Khin. She made her debut recording and broadcast with the song "Bawa Letkhana" (Sign of Life),

written by U Bo Khin, and was enlisted in the records of the Myanmar Radio Broadcasting Service. Throughout her career, the singer Daw Yi Yi Khin has released more than 100 albums and performed over 100 songs on television.

Some of the famous songs by classical singer Daw Yi Yi Khin include "Athe Alainmar", "Shwemoe Ngwemoe", "Pyawlikepar Sandar", "Malay Letkhatthan", "Malayletyar", "Panlo Hmweparse", "Eainmethlahla Metparse", "Gitaswanah", "Thanthayar Kheyethe", "Takatho Nang", "Sarsohnet Khwarnyo", "Thabawkaungtet Kowalone", "Shwenyarmyae", and "Yinhmatphyeththaw Myetashin". — ASH/TH

NATIONAL

DPM MoPF Union Minister discusses price stability mechanisms

DEPUTY Prime Minister Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Win Shein, Chairman of the Union Price Stability Committee, presided over the 1/2024 committee meeting yesterday.

In his speech, the Union minister stressed that the actions to stabilize the rice and cooking oil prices and proper activities for rice and paddy prices in the 2023-2024 monsoon paddy season based on the suggestions of MRF (Myanmar Rice Federation), were being carried out.

He added that the Central Statistics Organization and Department of Consumer Affairs collected the price lists of 14 essential foodstuffs in 22 townships starting from August 2023 and released the opinions and market status daily. According to the prices reported by the region/state committees to the Union Committee once every two weeks, the rice prices were slightly high in some



Deputy Prime Minister Union Planning and Finance Minister U Win Shein chairs the Union Price Stability Committee meeting 1/2024 yesterday.

regions and states. Moreover, the food trucks carrying basic foodstuffs, rice and palm oil

were sent to ministries, staff housings and universities to sell the products at fairer prices.

He also highlighted the need to conduct the cooking

oil distribution as per the SOP, whereas the Ministry of Commerce works with the Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association to ensure the sales are in accord with the allocated amount and the reference prices.

Moreover, the Ministry of Commerce also prioritized the import of medicines and medical supplies and the relevant committees, ministries concerned and private organizations should work together to implement the visions of the Union Price Stability Committee successfully.

Then, the vice-chair of the committee presented the completed work plans based on the decision of the 2/2023 meeting, distribution of reserved rice, systematic cooking oil distribution, and the chief ministers of regions and states reported on the manufacturing sectors.

The Deputy Prime Minister made proper instructions and concluded the meeting. — MNA/KTZH

Myanmar attends investment & business opportunities meeting in Viet Nam



Exchange of gifts at the event on 8 March in Viet Nam.

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has reported that Myanmar participated in a meeting on investment and business opportunities held on 8 March in Ha Long City, Quang Ninh Province, Viet Nam.

U Soe Ko Ko, Charge d'affaires ad interim to Viet Nam, represented Myanmar at the event upon the invitation of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Before the meeting commenced, U Soe Ko

Ko met Mr Cao Tuong Huy, President of the People's Committee of Quang Ninh Province. During their discussion, U Soe Ko Ko proposed enhancing bilateral cooperation in commerce and trade, agriculture, tourism, and garment exports in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations next year.

The event was also attended by ambassadors and commercial attaches from foreign embassies in Hanoi. — ASH/TMT

Political parties allowed to establish continue applying for registration

THOSE who want to establish a political party apply to the Union Election Commission by stating the name of the party they wish to establish. To date, 15 groups have applied for the right to establish a party, and among them, 12 political parties are allowed to establish.

Among these 12 political parties, Peace Betterment Party, led by Phone Kyar Phoo (aka

U Nay Win Maung, applied to the Commission for registration as a political party under Rule 7 of the Registration of Political Parties within 30 days from the date of approval. To date, nine political parties out of 12 have been approved to register, and the rest of the groups that have applied for registration permits are also under scrutiny. — MNA/KTZH

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

NATIONAL

Myanmar hosts 1st Meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fisheries & Livestock



The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fisheries and Livestock, which is hosted by Myanmar virtually, in progress yesterday.

MYANMAR virtually hosted the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fisheries and Livestock yesterday.

Representatives of BIMSTEC member states such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and from the BIMSTEC Secretary-General Office, Directors-General of affiliated departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and other relevant officials attended the event.

Director-General Dr Ye Tun Win of the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department presided over the meeting and discussed the matters related to fisheries and livestock technological cooperation with BIMSTEC members, fishing and animal product trade

and investment, enhancement of research and development programmes, state-level food security strategies, good practices in policy development and exchange of experiences.

The 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in Colombo on 1 April 2021 decided to establish an Expert Group on Fisheries and Livestock to deal with issues pertaining to fisheries and livestock.

The reconstituted sectors and sub-sectors of cooperation were adopted in the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit held on 30 March 2022 in Colombo, and the fisheries sector became fisheries and livestock sub-sector under the agriculture and food security sector in which Myanmar is serving as the leading country. — MNA/KTZH

Counter-argument to false information

False media reports mislead about security operations in Kachin State



The screenshot validates misinformation of Kachin News Group.

MALICIOUS media outlets have been spreading false news on social media, accusing security forces of attacking Mongka, Moeseinkyun, Sintkin and Kanni villages in Bhamo Township,

Kachin State, and killing five residents since 7 March.

However, the reality is that security forces were conducting security operations along the Myitkyina-Bhamo road and came under attack from both KIA and PDF terrorists.

A local clarified that civilian casualties in Bhamo and surrounding villages were a result of terrorists' shelling aimed at security forces.

Propaganda Facebook pages are circulating misinformation to sow discord towards security forces and stoke hate campaigns among the public. — MNA/NT

Malicious media Khit Thit spreading misinformation

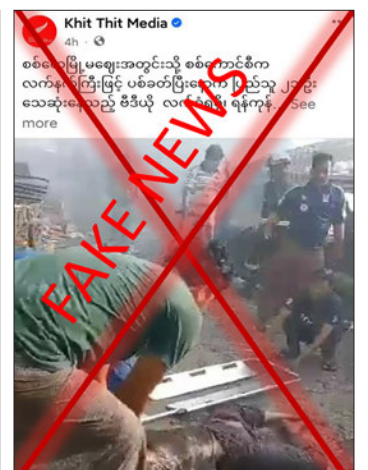
THE subversive media outlet Khit Thit is circulating false information on social media platforms, aiming to deceive the public. They claim that over 30 innocent individuals from Minbya, Rakhine State, were killed by security forces between 13 November 2023 and 23 January 2024 and that 21 people were killed by heavy weapon fire in the Sittway Myoma market on 29 February.

Reports indicate that AA terrorists operating in Rakhine State have instilled fear among the local population, disrupting peace and stability while undermining government mechanisms. They've launched attacks on towns




Screenshots validate misinformation and false claims of Khit Thit media.


and villages using heavy weapons, improvised missiles, and drones, disregarding the lives and property of the Rakhine people. Khit Thit media is con-



cealing these acts of terrorism by spreading false news on social media platforms, unjustly blaming Tatmadaw and leading the public astray. — MNA/TKO



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NATIONAL

128,705 students take Maths on 3rd day of 2024 matric exam

THE 2024 matriculation examination (new curriculum) continued its third day yesterday, and a total of 128,705 students sat for Mathematics exam across the

nation, including overseas exam centres. This year, a total of 841 exam centres, including 11 overseas exam centres and 830 exam centres at home, are open for

students. Altogether, 146,523 students enlisted to join the examination. For the third day, 128,705 students sat for the Maths with 17,818 absentees. The number

of students sitting for exams accounted for 87.84 per cent, according to the figures of the Ministry of Education. — MNA/KTZH

Department of Basic Education																
2024 Matriculation Examination region/state, district, township exam centres and numbers of students																
Subject-Mathematics															Date 13 - 3 - 2024	
No	Region/State	District	Township	Exam centres	Registration			Presence			Absence			Presence percentage	Absence percentage	Remark
					Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
1	Kachin	6	14	26	2349	3658	6007	2216	3530	5746	133	128	261	95.66%	4.34%	
2	Kayah	No exam centre														
3	Kayin	6	7	11	892	1504	2396	787	1393	2180	105	111	216	90.98%	9.02%	
4	Chin	6	7	10	730	993	1723	151	250	401	579	743	1322	23.27%	76.73%	
5	Sagaing	14	25	37	2389	3720	6109	2206	3461	5667	183	259	442	92.76%	7.24%	
6	Taninthayi	4	10	17	994	1641	2635	922	1573	2495	72	68	140	94.69%	5.31%	
7	Bago (East)	3	14	34	3083	4406	7489	2918	4210	7128	165	196	361	95.18%	4.82%	
8	Bago (West)	3	14	45	2547	3443	5990	2425	3344	5769	122	99	221	96.31%	3.69%	
9	Magway	7	23	44	4053	5768	9821	3852	5618	9470	201	150	351	96.43%	3.57%	
10	Mandalay	11	28	74	8397	11819	20216	8007	11398	19405	390	421	811	95.99%	4.01%	
11	Mon	4	10	20	2274	3741	6015	2149	3618	5767	125	123	248	95.88%	4.12%	
12	Rakhine	7	17	69	8400	10202	18602	3937	4590	8527	4463	5612	10075	45.84%	54.16%	
13	Yangon	14	45	73	8609	10343	18952	8141	9903	18044	468	440	908	95.21%	4.79%	
14	Shan (South)	8	21	64	3106	4968	8074	2949	4749	7698	157	219	376	95.34%	4.66%	
15	Shan (North)	6	14	17	1124	1729	2853	777	1203	1980	347	526	873	69.40%	30.60%	
16	Shan (East)	7	10	12	450	654	1104	420	632	1052	30	22	52	95.29%	4.71%	
17	Ayeyawady	8	26	230	8271	11576	19847	7762	11180	18942	509	396	905	95.44%	4.56%	
18	Nay Pyi Taw	4	8	47	3750	4926	8676	3611	4810	8421	139	116	255	97.06%	2.94%	
Total		118	293	830	61418	85091	146509	53230	75462	128692	8188	9629	17817	87.84%	12.16%	
Remark	Only the numbers of districts, townships, where the exam is held, and exam centres are expressed. - Overseas exam centres are not included.															



Chaungzon Township, Mon State.



Hlaingbwe Township, Kayin State.



Hopong in Pa-O Self-Administered Zone.



Magway Township, Magway Region.



Mogaung Township, Kachin State.



Monghsat Town, Shan State (East).



Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State (South).



Thandwe Township, Rakhine State.

NATIONAL



The 83rd birthday celebration was held in 2023.

Rector Sayadaw's 84th birthday to be celebrated on 24 March

THE 84th birthday celebration of Rector Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Dr Bhaddanta Nandamala Bhivamsa, the patron monk of

the Mahā Subodhayon Monastery and Shwekyin Nikaya Upa Ukkatha Maha Nayaka, will be held on 24 March (the full moon day of Taboung).

In commemoration of this event, offerings will be made to 500 monks and 500 nuns at Maha Subodhayon Monastery. — TWA/MKKS

People Square's underground water tank, roof slab 90% complete

ACCORDING to the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), the construction of the 200,000-gallon underground water tank and the roof slab of the water pumping station at the People's Square and People's Park is 90 per cent complete.

The underground water tank, with a capacity of 200,000 gallons, measures 80 feet in length, 40 feet in width, and 11 feet in depth. The water pumping station is 40 feet long and 18 feet wide and utilises four 30 HP (22

kW) pumps.

Once the construction of the underground water tank and the roof slab of the water pumping station is finished, grass will be planted on it to enhance the landscape.

Moreover, the underground water will be collected and stored for use during the upcoming Myanmar traditional water festival (Thingyan), as well as for public events held at the People's Square and People's Park. — TWA/TKO



Yangon Mayor U Bo Htay seen inspecting the construction of an underground water tank at People's Square and Public Park on 12 March.

China resumes purchase of Myanmar plum seeds amid favourable market

CHINA has resumed buying plum seeds produced in Myanmar, and the market is currently good, according to the plum seed trading market.

"There is a plum seed trading market in Mandalay, and there are buyers from China. The sale is good occasionally and not good sometimes," said Ko Lauk El, who runs a palm seed shop in Mandalay.

China buys plum seeds from Myanmar, mainly for use in traditional medicines, and there are also purchases from South Korea, according to plum seeds traders.

Plum seed exports to major buyers in China were halt-

ed in November 2023, and the price declined. The market was also quiet in October.

"Currently, there are Chinese buyers in the Mandalay market, so the trading has become regular again. It is expected that there will be regular purchases again. The market has been good. We trade plum seeds that are collected from other towns. The price is not stable," said a plum seed trader.

In November last year, the price of the plum seed per viss was up to K70,000; however, the market price in March was roughly K60,000 per viss. — Thit Taw/ZS

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Yangon hosts Iftar reception

THE Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Yangon organized the Iftar and Ramadan Tent at the Lotte Hotel, Yangon, yesterday.

The event was attended by diplomats, business persons,

Muslims and non-Muslims in Yangon Region, at the invitation of Ambassador Saud A Alsubaie and Madame Hanan F Alwadi. "This is the second day of Ramadan, and the Iftar

reception was organized by the ambassador of the Saudi Arabian Embassy," a participant told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM). — ASH/KTZH



The ambassador of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia poses for the documentary group photo together with participants at yesterday's event.

Bangladesh prepares rice deal with MRF in strategic move

BANGLADESH is preparing to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a rice deal with the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF), according to the news reported by the Financial Express.

The Bangladesh government is preparing to procure rice and other farm produce from Myanmar's private sector to meet its growing demand and replenish reserved stocks.

The Financial Express stated that Bangladesh's Ministry of Commerce shared the draft MoU with the stakeholders and asked for their opinions by 10 March 2024, according to the ministry's recent meeting.

Additionally, Myanmar wants to supply ginger, garlic, and onion to Bangladesh, apart from rice, by signing an agreement. Myanmar dispatched the first draft MoU in October last year for review, Commerce officials said.

The MOU will be signed soon; therefore, the recent meeting held at Bangladesh's Ministry of Commerce decided to gather opinions from the stakeholders concerned in late February. They are asked not to make excessive changes in the proposed draft in detail so that it can be finalized shortly.



File photo shows bags of export rice being loaded onto the overseas-going cargo ship at international port in Patheingyi. PHOTO: KANU

Bangladesh decided to hold a virtual meeting with Myanmar's ministry concerned in order to fix a signing day for the MoU.

Bangladesh's Ministry of Commerce received the list of the agricultural produce that Myanmar wants to supply to Bangladesh, and they asked for the opinions of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Food, an official told the Financial Express.

Md Ariful Hassan, chairman of

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, will sign an MoU addressed that the government-to-government pact will help them facilitate procurement of the required farm produce. Additionally, it will help the corporation get products at a cheaper rate.

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a G-to-G MoU in September 2022, in which Myanmar will export 250,000 tonnes of rice and 50,000 tonnes of parboiled rice annually from 2022 to 2027. — NN/EM

Colombo Intl Tea Convention 2024 welcomes Myanmar business delegates

COLOMBO International Tea Convention 2024, which will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 24 to 26 July 2024, invites Myanmar businesspersons engaged in the tea trade and beverage industry, according to the Trade Promotion Division.

The convention aims to provide a solid platform to bring worldwide tea lovers, tea exporters/importers, businesspersons with common interests, influencers, and bloggers together on the topic of tea, a lifestyle, and a livelihood.

Those enthusiastic can enquire about registration through Ms Pavithri Peiris (pavithrip@pureceylontea.com, +94 777688554) and Mr Sampath Perera (sempath@pureceylontea.com, +94 779940500). — NN/KK

The people are urged to receive vaccination of Covid-19 without fail as full-time vaccination of Covid-19 and receiving booster shots can effectively mitigate infection of the virus, severe suffering from the disease and increase of death rate due to the disease.

Weekly market update of dry groceries at Bayintnaung wholesale centre

FOR the week from 6 to 12 March 2024, the prices of black grams, pigeon peas and chickpeas in the Bayintnaung wholesale market declined. The onion price is on a downward trend. The palm oil reference price remains unchanged.

Onion

The Bayintnaung wholesale market saw the supply of 240,000 visses of onions on 12 March. The wholesale prices moved in the range of K2,200 and K3,700 per viss depending on the quality, size and producing areas (Seikphyu and Monywa) that day.

The Pakokku market witnessed an inflow of 37,000 visses of new monsoon onions on 12 March. The highest price was

K2,250 per viss there.

Garlic

The prices of Kyukok garlic hit K9,800 per viss, whereas the garlic from Aungban, Shan State, fetched K8,000-K9,000 per viss depending on varieties and qualities.

Chilli pepper

The wholesale prices of chilli peppers were registered at K63,000-K90,000 per viss for long chilli pepper and Moehtaung variety on 12 March. The prices of bell peppers from the Sinphyukyun and Bilin areas were K97,000-15,500 per viss.

Pulses

The prices of various pulses stood at K2,990,000 per tonne of



A dry grocery retail shop.

black grams (Fair Average Quality/RC), K3,200,000 per tonne of black grams (Special Quality/RC), K3,825,000 per tonne of pigeon peas (red grams) RC, K4,000 per viss of green grams (Shwewah) and K5,900-K6,200 per viss of chickpeas in Yangon's

wholesale markets on 12 March 2024.

Rice

The prices hit K86,000-K90,000 per sack of non-premium monsoon rice and K100,000-K135,000 per sack of Pawkywe variety on 13 March.

Meanwhile, the new premium quality Pawsan rice was worth K160,000 per sack depending on the producing areas (Pyapon, Myaungmya, Shwebo).

Potato

Shan potatoes were priced at K1,200-1,600 per viss on 6 March. Potatoes are of inferior quality in extreme weather conditions. Potatoes from the Pakokku area are K200 per viss higher than Shan potato.

Palm oil

For a week from 11 to 17 March 2024, the wholesale reference price of Yangon Region stayed the same at K5,215 per viss like that of last week. — TWA/KK

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News and Periodicals Enterprise



OPINION

Help examinees see brighter futures passing a turning point

THE matriculation examination for the academic year 2023-24 kicked off on 11 March 2024, marking a pivotal moment in the lives of student youths. This examination, spanning from 11 to 19 March, serves as a crucial turning point for those aspiring to shape brighter futures. Successful candidates in this Grade-12 examination also called the matriculation examination, will gain significant opportunities to enrol in relevant universities and pursue higher education, charting a course towards their desired careers.

This examination holds a distinctive significance as the very first Grade-12 assessment under the new education system. Beyond its importance for students, it is equally crucial for teachers who have

undergone training and adapted to a new curriculum and examination format. Throughout the academic year, both teachers and students have demonstrated heightened interest and commitment to navigating this transitional period in education. Notably, this year's participation in the new matriculation examination is lower than the previous year's old system examination. The decrease in the number of students could be attributed, in part, to concerns about the threats posed by individuals undermining peace and stability across the nation. In Yangon Region alone, 73 exam centres have been established to accommodate 8,609 male students, 10,342 female students, and 2,509 external students across various subjects. Authorities have taken comprehensive measures to ensure the convenience and safety of students at all exam centres nationwide. This includes addressing security concerns, managing traffic congestion, and implementing health protocols. Special arrangements have been made for students undergoing medical treatments, with dedicated hospital exam centres provided. Remarkably, efforts are underway to facilitate the participation of students who have relocated from unsafe areas for various reasons, enabling them to take the examination in their respective regions without losing opportunities. Adherence to prescribed rules and regulations is imperative, contributing to the successful administration of the Grade-12 examination in the new education system. Given its significance as a turning point in the lives of student youths, the responsibility for the successful and safe conduct of the matriculation examination extends beyond authorities to encompass students, teachers, and parents. A collective effort is essential to ensure the seamless administration of the examination, providing students with the opportunity to make informed choices regarding their future academic endeavours. Thus, the collaboration of all stakeholders is vital in fostering a peaceful environment for examinees to envision and embrace their futures.

Given its significance as a turning point in the lives of student youths, the responsibility for the successful and safe conduct of the matriculation examination extends beyond authorities to encompass students, teachers, and parents. A collective effort is essential to ensure the seamless administration of the examination, providing students with the opportunity to make informed choices regarding their future academic endeavours. Thus, the collaboration of all stakeholders is vital in fostering a peaceful environment for examinees to envision and embrace their futures.

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THE story of February has not been about how the weather is turning from a nice cooling morning to scorching hot afternoons. It is also not on the expectations gap between the change that we were expecting on 1 February and the reality of the lack of changes in the new cabinet. Even the atrocities of the AA (Arakanese Army) terror group, killing close to one thousand innocent family members of military personnel along a river just north of Sittway, did not stay in the headlines for too long.

The digital news headlines, Facebook and fake news outlets have bombarded everyone with the initiation of compulsory national military service for all eligible citizens of Myanmar. First, let us get the fake news out of the mainstream.

1. Even though there are stories of allegedly being forced into service in some towns and villages (local term: getting 'porters'), I personally followed up on some of these stories, and no corroborative evidence has been found to

support these allegations.

2. Running away to a foreign land is not the solution. Myanmar people tend to panic and overreact at even the slightest rumour, and social media posts have been about how to migrate overseas to avoid the service. Unless the Thai, Singapore, US, or UK governments would give their passports away in a bonanza to anyone from Myanmar for simply claiming to be a political dissident and showing a picture taken together with Su Kyi, this isn't going to work. As long as you still need to renew or extend your passport, even evasion of two per cent tax on overseas income is not doable, let alone evading the national service.

3. And you are not getting sent to the frontlines to help out the numbers in the combat in the border regions. With the current shortage of government budget, depreciating kyats, and high cost of military weapons, you would have to be super lucky

Do We Really Need Compulsory National Service?

By U AC

to have a chance to throw a grenade individually during your training. The first year would be simply basic military training and doing mundane tasks like cleaning, carrying things, and repairs and maintenance, and in the second year, you would perhaps be shown how to handle a weapon. There is fat hope for those who want to get shipped out to get into some action.

4. The chances of getting selected are really slim. That is a fact. There are 13 million eligible citizens who fall into the specified age range. Yet, with the call-up rate at 5,000 persons a month, the chances

of getting selected (<0.04 per cent) may be at worse odds than winning a lottery of some kind. So, fret not. It probably could NOT be you!

The question is not whether we need mandatory national military service but why we should not have it! Consider South East Asia. Our neighbouring Laos, Viet Nam and Thailand have it. Singapore has it. Only countries with larger populations, such as India, China, Bangladesh, Indonesia, etc., are going without the mandated conscription. Even Koreans have it. Why should we not have it, especially under the current circumstances, especially when the rebel forces are strong, terrorist activities are rampant across this

vast land, and the public needs to be educated on how to defend their towns and villages against these threats.

What benefits would we get?

Mandatory national service would foster unity and bring people from diverse backgrounds together. Think of why Tatmadaw is the strongest institution in Myanmar: because of the band of brothers getting together to protect the motherland.

Compulsory service would save the government money and provide benefits to all citizens. In an era of high unemployment (other than farming), it would provide an avenue for youth to burn their time and energy into

productive activities during the two years of service. Plus, after they leave the service, they will be equipped with a mindset of good work ethics, unity, and national defence in order to protect their towns and villages against all threats.

Performing national service would help young people mature and serve as a bridge to adulthood. Instead of wasting their youths at tea shops, playing video games, watching porn or getting addicted to social media, they would become responsible adults by being in service and be proud that they have served the nation.

The beneficial side effect of this, at the end of the day, would be the downright segregation of

the population: those who love the country and want to serve and be counted upon and those who want to selfishly get what they want out of this land and spend it overseas and eventually migrate.

What do we lose out?

Research has shown that compulsory conscription service is negative to economic growth, as it takes away a certain percentage of productive workers from the economy. Obviously, this theory has certain assumptions, such as the country has a certain level of youth employment, and there is little or no involuntary unemployment. Neither of these is applicable to youth in Myanmar, unfortunately. Hence, the positive externalities are expected to exceed this somewhat negative economic impact.

Mandating national service might infringe on the freedom to choose what to do with our lives. Yet, the plan has been in place and agreed upon at least ten years ago. People's Military Service Law was already in place in November 2010. SAC only set the date (10 February) for the law

to come into force. National interest must always come before individual interests, and the little freedom that we give away for the greater good of the nation could be the most altruistic action one has ever performed in a lifetime.

A mandatory service programme could be manipulated by the rich and unfairly harm others. Even in countries such as Korea, they are called 'sons of gods' - the number of those kids of rich and powerful families who somehow get exemption from service is always greater than those from ordinary backgrounds. Be it due to corruption or abuse of power, Myanmar has to watch out for abuse of the exemption rules from service.

In the meantime, SAC spokesman Maj-Gen Zaw Min Tun confirmed on 20 February that there would be no female recruitment for the year 2024 and only suitable war veterans would be assigned for military service under Reserve Forces Law (refuting the misinformation that all veterans are being recalled to serve).

THE 11th of March 2024 (to use the historic present tense) is a notable date in the educational history of Myanmar. Since perhaps the 1920s (if not earlier), government-sponsored Matriculation exams have been held (with a few exceptions) almost yearly in the months of March or April. Matriculation students had to study until the 10th standard, and at the end of the tenth standard, they had to sit for the government-supervised Matriculation exams. Now, for the first time, those who take the Matriculation exam starting in 2024 are Grade XII (12th standard) students. Students would have to spend roughly 12 years in high school (instead of the usual 10) before they are eligible to take the matriculation exams.

Myanmar sar and English are the compulsory 'language papers' regardless of the arts, science or arts-science combination that students take for the Matriculation exams.

This article provides a survey of the prescribed textbooks in the compulsory English papers used for the school (academic) years 1968-69 to 2018-19.

Matriculation English Texts 1968-69 to 2018-19: A Retrospect and Possibility for Research

By Dr Myint Zan

Matriculation English Texts from 1968-69 to 1972-73: *Six Tales from Shakespeare and Seven Inventors*

Six Tales from Shakespeare are retold 'tales' in simple English mainly targeted at 8/9 to 11/12 years old native speakers. The copy that I have was printed in 1971 by Trade Corporation 9, Rangoon. The slim booklet covers Shakespeare's plays *The Merchant of Venice*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. It was taught in both the 9th and 10th standards during those years.

The text *Seven Inventors*, mainly taught in the then 10th standard, is less easy to comprehend than the simplified *Six Tales from Shakespeare*. The author was Harry McNicol. A quick search on the World Wide Web

yields the information that it was first published by Oxford University Press in 1943. It narrates the life stories and inventions of Richard Arkwright, Josiah Wedgwood, Charles Goodyear, The Brothers Wright, Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi.

There have been a few critiques of the two prescribed textbooks, and in a Letter to the Editor of *The Guardian* (Rangoon) published on or around 20 October 1972, E W Dalton, who has written English grammar texts, stated that, among others, the weak standards of most high school students in Myanmar may, in part, be due to the two textbooks. (Mr Dalton also listed other reasons.)

Similar concerns about the generally low standard of English were echoed by the late Saya Tet Toe, whose article in *The Working People's Daily* on or about 21 June

1973 was titled 'English: A Killer'. From my firm memory, Tet Toe started his article thus: 'If a student fails the (Matric) exam he or she rarely fails to fail in English' and he concluded: 'Something should be done to change this killer subject into a stimulus for improvement'.

Perhaps in part to 'stimulate' improvement, the Matriculation textbook starting from the academic year 1973-74 (the very year Tet Toe's article appeared) was changed.

Matriculation English Texts for the year 1973-74 to 1985-86

This text, which lasted 13 academic years, is not based on a particular book like *Seven Inventors*, but it is a compilation of various articles in a single book. Yours truly cannot find or purchase the book, so you cannot reproduce

the photo of the book here. The writer's recollection contains a chapter in simple English about the Burmese military commander Maha Bandoola (6 November 1782-1 April 1825) and primatologist Jane Goodall (born 3 April 1934).

The format of the Matriculation English exams changed too. When the two texts above were taught from 1968-69 to 1972-73, the exam questions included an (unseen) Essay question. In fact, three topics were given in the 1970 English exam paper 'Write three paragraphs of one of the following: Your Town, Your Teacher, Your Ambition'. I was told by a teacher who had marked English Matric papers that a few students, when writing their essays, just copied and pasted the essay question 'Your Town' instead of writing 'My Town'!

Moreover, when answering the question on the retold story 'Macbeth', a student wrote 'Macbeth and Banquo came back from the **battle** and are on the **heat**' when she or he actually meant 'Macbeth and Banquo came back from the **battle** and were riding across the **heath** (when they met the three witches)'. Another report which I recall reading from the then English Department on the exams was that there was a question worth ten marks with ten fill-in-the-blanks and ten sentences. Students have to choose to fill in the blanks from the words provided. I definitely recall reading in the report that a student wrote, 'He drives his car very slowly because the road is **vegetables**!' (instead of 'dangerous') Both 'vegetables' (for the sentence 'U Ba grows vegetables in his garden') and 'dangerous'

were in the list above the blanks. There were **no prompts or outlines for the essay provided at the start of the essay** in the essay questions for the years 1968-69 to 1972-73.

In contrast, I clearly recall the 1974 English Matric exam with the new textbook had the essay (no choices were given) 'Why I like dogs better than cats' (or vice versa) **with prompts**. In 1986 (the last year this textbook was used before the text shifted to a truncated, simplified version of *Wuthering Heights* with prompts was 'My favourite Aunt'. I have learned that a few students wrote in their papers, 'There are two kinds of **ants**: the black **ants** and the red **ants**!'

Moreover, there were two parts in the Matric English paper during those 13 years. Part A consists of multiple choice questions,

which are worth around 30 marks or even 40 marks out of 100 marks.

Not only did the textbook change starting from the academic year 1986-87 for Matriculation students but the so-called Part A of multiple choice questions was also gone. Perhaps since 1987, no prompts or outlines have been given in the compulsory essay questions in the Matriculation English papers.

Simplified version of *Wuthering Heights* 1986-87 to (1992-93?)

Emily Bronte (30 July 1818-19 December 1848) first published her novel *Wuthering Heights* (initially under the pseudonym Ellis Bell) in 1847. One hundred and forty years later (to repeat), a simplified version of the only novel that she published became a text for about seven years for Matriculation students in Burma. A former Professor of Myanmar language who had temporarily taught *Myanmar Sar* in a neighbouring country has stated how she, as a 16-year-old, had to struggle with the love story of the hero-villain Heathcliff and Cathy Earnshaw.

SEE PAGE-12

NATIONAL

Dolphins captured near Kyakan beach in Hainggyikyun released back into sea



FIFTEEN dolphins were accidentally trapped in fishing nets by a villager named U Myint Lwin in Hainggyikyun, Patheingyi District, Ayeyawady Region, at around 2 pm on 12 March. Upon realizing the unintentional capture, all 15 dolphins were promptly released back into the sea.

It was observed that the dolphins became entangled in the nets while they were feeding on natural weeds in the area. To prevent similar incidents in the future, the Fishery Department has directed the restriction of fishing activities in the surrounding marine region of Kyakan beach during the Mawtinsun Pagoda Festival period, as reported by the Fishery Department. — Hlaing Myo Aung (Hainggyikyun/ IPRD)/TMT

Local people from Hainggyikyun prepare to release 15 dolphins into the sea on 12 March 2024 after being captured accidentally in the fishing nets in Hainggyikyun Town, Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: HLAING MYO AUNG**

ME in Malaysia shifts application process to QR code booking for C of I issuance

SUBMISSION of applications will be changed to the QR code booking system as of 18 March to facilitate the certificate of Identity (C of I) issuing process, the Myanmar Embassy in Malaysia announced on 12 March.

According to the statement, the Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur has been providing services for the extension of ordinary Myanmar passports, applications for the replacement of lost passports, and issuing new passports through an online reservation system. In order to

facilitate the necessary verification process and to help office procedures efficient for issuing C of I within a day free of charge for Myanmar nationals, it will work with the QR code appointment system as of 18 March at www.mekl.org.

Applicants for C of I are required to fill data correctly at www.mekl.org and select “application of Certificate of Identity” in types of services, it said. The embassy will re-send the appointment date to the applicant’s email, it added. — MT/ZS



The Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

YGEA takes action against gold price speculators, including verbal dealer

ACTION has been taken against some gold merchants, shop owners and those making verbal deals, U Myo Myint, Chairman of the Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA), told The Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

The YGEA announces the price of gold three times a day, and due to some speculators, the price in the external market is unstable, so the authorities concerned have taken action, he said.

“The market price is unstable because of some speculators. So, the department concerned is taking action. Some of them are gold traders, some are shopkeepers, and some are the groups making verbal deals,” he said.

According to a request letter issued by the YGEA on 12 March, gold traders have been urged to trade just below the prescribed price and to avoid spreading rumours and speculations.



Premium gold of the Academy emblem with rising price on the market.

“The reason behind the unstable market is not actual trading. For example, a verbal dealer bought gold for K4 million, but he had no money to pay in the evening, so he pawned it to another person with K3,000 daily interest. The next morning, the oral dealer sold his gold at K4 million plus the interest he had given. That’s how Lae Pucca (verbal deals) are made. A verbal deal is a non-physical deal with no actual gold or money. These verbal dealers trade on Facebook in the evening. If

you tell them you want to sell, they will reply that they are not buying. They are just posting the price. And if you want to buy, they will deliver the gold. It is a series of lies and deceits,” he said.

YGEA’s prices per tical of premium gold on 12 March and 13 March were K3,792,600 and K3,795,800, respectively, at 10 am opening, K3,794,900 and K3,795,800 respectively at 12:30 mid-day, and K3,796,600 at 2:30 pm closing on 12 March. — MT/ZN

NATIONAL

Explosion occurs on Kabaung Bridge on Yangon-Mandalay railway in Toungoo Township



Photos depict the Kabaung Bridge, which is located between Toungoo and Thaungdinegon stations in Toungoo Township, Bago Region, was exploded by terrorists on 12 March.

AN explosion occurred on the Kabaung Bridge, a 680-foot-long beam bridge located between Toungoo and Thaungdinegon stations in Toungoo Township,

Bago Region, at approximately 8:37 pm on 12 March.

Upon receiving the news, responsible officials and the local security team proceeded

to the site for inspection. They found that the brick platform was destroyed, leading to the closure of the railway section between Toungoo and Thaung-



dinegon.

Following safety measures and a strength test of the bridge, the railway section was reopened at 7:25 the following morning.

Terrorist groups are suspected of mining the bridge. Although the explosion did not cause significant damage, it had the potential to disrupt passenger and cargo transport if the bridge had been destroyed.

Various terrorist groups have been planting mines near railway areas and stations 13 times, exploding railway bridges 50 times, and setting fire to stations and employee housing 12 times since 1 February 2021.

These actions aim to undermine law and order and threaten the safety of travellers, drawing widespread condemnation from the public. — MNA/NT

Confiscations of illegal items: Timbers, industrial materials, consumer goods, foodstuffs and vehicles

DURING inspections on 11 March, Customs on-duty teams seized nine types of goods valued at K225.45 million from three containers at the Myanmar Industrial Port. These included 1,320 pairs of DJ Fresh solar floodlights with panels and two sets of Ching Kuen Caped Wrapping Paper Machines that were not declared in the Import Declaration (ID). Additionally, two types of goods valued at approximately K61 million were seized from two containers at the Asia World Port Terminal container checkpoint. These goods comprised 50 kilogrammes of measurement equipment exceeding the quantity stated in the ID.

Moreover, two vehicles travelling from Hpa-an to Yangon and from Mawlamyine to Yangon were intercepted. These vehicles, valued at approximately K65 million, were found to be carrying two types of goods worth K12.8 million, including 4,300 Iwachi LED bulbs and 2,160 bags of Smart softener without official documents. These enforcement actions were carried out according to Customs procedures.

On 12 March, joint teams impounded 2,400 bottles of Two-Shrimp brand edible oil and 13,200 bottles of Sponsor juice valued at K16.9 million without official documents in Mawlamyine Township. This

action was conducted under Customs procedures.

Furthermore, on the same day, the combined team confiscated 2,000 kilogrammes of fishing nets worth K6 million without official documents in Myeik Township. Additionally, illegal timber weighing 3.592 tonnes and valued at K538,920 was seized in Kanthaya village in Myeik Township. These actions were taken under Customs procedures and the Forest Law.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee reported that 11 arrests were made on 11 and 12 March, with an estimated value of K401.7 million. — MNA/MKKS



Photos depict seized illegal commodities on 11-12 March 2024.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 13 March 2024)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 14 March 2024: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi regions and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Yangon Region and Chin, Kayin and Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3-6) feet in off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight increase of day temperatures in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Bago regions.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 March 2024: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 March 2024: A few cloud

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 March 2024: Generally fair weather.

COVID-19 report, 11 March 2024

NEW TESTS

20,760

NEW CASES

36

CASUALTIES

Nil

ECONOMY WORLD

Matriculation English Texts 1968-69 to 2018-19: A Retrospect and ...

FROM PAGE-9

I do not know the exact year the truncated *Wuthering Heights* ceased to be a Matriculation English text, but it may have ended with the 1993 Matriculation exam or a year earlier or later. When the text was introduced in the 1986-87 academic year, the then Education Minister declared his 'avowed' aim of enhancing the standard of education. Thus, the then education authorities made *Wuthering Heights* (simplified version), which was taught in the intermediate classes at Rangoon University in the early 1960s, should be taught in the Matriculation year in the whole nation. Or so I have heard.

Those years saw the re-division of arts and science subjects, starting in the ninth standard. The anomaly of the *Wuthering Heights* as Matric-English-text-years was such that those who passed the Matriculation exam from the again redivided Science combination even if they got distinctions (75 per cent and above) in English could not take 'arts subjects' like English (for that matter Myanmar, Law, Philosophy etc) but perhaps those who got say 55 per cent or even 50 per cent in the Matriculation English marks **from the Arts Division** can take English as a major! After about five to seven years of *Wuthering Heights*

(simplified version) the Matric English text was changed again.

Thirty Burmese (Myanmar) Tales as Matric Text from 1993-94 (?) to 1999-2000(?)

Thirty Burmese Tales (later *Thirty Myanmar Tales*) was first published by Oxford University Press in 1952. It was authored by our very own Sayagyi Dr Htin Aung (18 May 1909-10 May 1978), who, among many others, was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Rangoon.

Dr Htin Aung's book was also one of the Matric texts in the year 1953-54 and perhaps later and earlier years. It became the Matric English text again starting from 1993-94 (or a year or two earlier) and ended in 1999-2000 or a year or two earlier. I had the chance to re-read the book just several days ago, and I learned the origin of the use of the Myanmar terms (*Po Nay Myae Kyar Nay Myae* ပိုနေမြဲ ကျားနေမြဲ) (Maung Po remains in the same/previous place and the tiger remains in the same/previous place) the story of (*Shin Mway Noone* ရှင်မွေးနှမ်း) and the root of the term (*Akyan Koan Galon Sar Chet* အကြံတိုက် ဝဠာန် ဆားချာတ်) ('The Galon bird/Garuda running out of options began to process salt by the sea shore'). *Thirty Myanmar Tales* as a Matric text lasted about five or six years. Its 'tenure' is roughly the

same as those of *Six Tales from Shakespeare* and *Seven Inventors*, which lasted five years from 1969 to 1973.

Matric Text with the longest 'tenure' from 1999-2000 to 2018-19

Almost a generation of matriculated students have had to study the same or very similar Matric text post-1999. From the academic year 2020-21, Grade XI and Grade XII additional English texts were produced. Hence, there may be innovations and amendments to the previous text for the 10th standard. The changes and/or additions of texts, say, from *Wuthering Heights* (edited and simplified) to *Thirty Myanmar Tales* were radical changes, but post-2020 changes (in the form of additional texts,) unlike previous changes, display continuity in substance and pedagogy.

The concerned educational authorities are to be complimented for not changing the texts for quite some time (around 20 years) and for specifically including techniques to enhance reading, writing, vocabulary, and even speaking skills among the students fairly comprehensively in the current English textbooks for Grades X, XI and XII.

Moreover, for the past 20 years or so, the exam questions

can be said to be of higher quality, especially those dealing with essays. Compare the compulsory single essay question (in that there is no choice) with **outlines or 'prompts'** provided: 'Why I like dogs better than cats' in the 1974 Matric exam with the 2018 essay question **without prompts** 'Trees are the lungs of the Earth'. Compare also the single essay question in the 1986 Matric exam, 'My favourite Aunt' (with prompts), with one of the three essay questions in the English exam held on 12 March 2024: 'Benefits and drawbacks of making new friends online' (without prompts). (In the year 1986, even more so in 1974, none of the students and, for that matter, English teachers would understand the current implications of the word 'online' since the internet and the world wide web were a long way off in the future!)

Suggestions for research

I have focussed mainly on past textbooks and have written relatively little on current high school and matriculation texts as they are easily available.

It is advisable indeed it would be beneficial to do further research for, say, an honours paper or even an MA thesis for English major students and education-related scholars to pedagogically study the five se-

ries of Matric English texts of the timeline provided (50 years: 1969 to 2019).

A pedagogic study of these texts could include but would not be limited to the reasons or motives for adopting these prescribed texts in the respective years; the teachers' guides (if any: some of the texts have had separate teachers' guides); the methodology of teaching and learning these texts: the pass and failure rates in the English language papers when these texts were prescribed (it is realized that these may be difficult to retrieve); the reports of the respective English Departments after the exam results (I have seen and read at least one of those reports); interviews with English language teachers who had taught as well as students who had gone through these texts (again it is realized that it would be easier to retrieve information about texts post-1990s and post-2000 than in the earlier years).

Conducting such research and writing an academic paper or thesis may be a challenging task, but it is a worthwhile undertaking. This narrative, survey and comments are written mainly with the aim of encouraging English and 'education major' students and researchers to embark on such a study.

■

China's central SOEs further assist Xinjiang in expanding employment

The investments cover a wide range of industries, such as petroleum, natural gas, coal, renewable energy, transportation, environmental protection, communications, healthcare, and infrastructure construction.

CHINA'S centrally-administered state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have intensified efforts to assist Xinjiang in expanding employment since 2022, pledging to further support high-quality development in Xinjiang.

According to a conference held by the Xinjiang government and China's top state-asset regulator on Monday, the central enterprises' work in assisting the development of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has achieved remarkable results in the past two years.

A total of 227 projects, backed by 41 central SOEs, have been



This aerial photo taken on 15 November 2023 shows the Yuejin 3-3XC Well of China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec) in Tarim Basin of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. **PHOTO: SINOPEC**

slated for investment totalling approximately 1.1 trillion yuan

(about 155 billion US dollars).

The investments span

various sectors, including petroleum, natural gas, coal, new energy, transportation, environmental protection, communications, healthcare and infrastructure construction. Over the past two years, these endeavours have cumulatively created jobs for approximately 251,000 people, said Chen Weijun, vice chairman of the regional government of Xinjiang.

Combining their own advantages with the reality of Xinjiang, the central enterprises attending the conference have devised plans to support industries in Xinjiang between 2024 and 2026.

Over a three-year span, they

intend to invest in 133 projects totaling nearly 695 billion yuan, with plans to hire 33,000 new employees.

Zhang Yuzhuo, chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, stated that in order to support the development of Xinjiang, central SOEs would further optimize industrial cooperation, boost investment in emerging technologies, sectors and markets, cultivate new quality productive forces, and continuously expand employment capacity through industrial development. — Xinhua

Adidas reports 2023 loss, as Kanye fallout weighs

GERMAN sportswear giant Adidas reported an annual loss for 2023 on Wednesday, still weighed down by the fallout from the end of its tie-up with controversial rapper Kanye West.

The loss of 75 million euros (\$82 million) followed a profit of 612 million euros the previous year.

Sales fell by five per cent to 21.4 billion euros, and were hit particularly hard in the United States due to the discontinuation of sales of Yeezy trainers that were designed with West.

Sales slipped slightly

in the fourth quarter, with a particularly heavy fall in North America as Adidas sold less to wholesalers as it sought to reduce excess inventory.

In 2022, Adidas broke off its contract with West after he made a series of anti-Semitic remarks, leaving it stuck with thousands of unsold Yeezy shoes they had developed together. Two Yeezy sales in 2023 brought in 750 million euros, well below the 1.2 billion euros of revenue the logo had generated in 2022.

Adidas is giving profits from the sales to charities. — AFP

Cathay Pacific 'is back' with first annual profit since 2019

HONG Kong carrier Cathay Pacific on Wednesday reported its first annual net profit in four years, citing a surge in demand as it emerges from the impact of the city's Covid isolation.

While airlines around the world have struggled to reclaim pre-pandemic capacity, Cathay's top executives acknowledged their rebound faced a prolonged trajectory.

The financial hub, which had one world's busiest and best-connected airports, was one of the last cities to ditch strict travel restrictions and quarantine requirements.

"In 2023, we finally left the Covid-19 pandemic behind us," Cathay chair

Despite the positive turnaround, executives recognize that the rebound will be gradual, considering the prolonged impact of the pandemic on global travel.



Cathay Pacific's net profit of \$1.25 billion was the airline's first since 2019. PHOTO: AFP

Patrick Healy said in a results announcement, adding that it was "our first

profitable year since 2019". He later added that "Hong Kong opened up

so much later than other global hubs".

CEO Ronald Lam thanked stakeholders, adding: "Cathay is back!"

Cathay said profit surged to \$1.25 billion last year, compared with a loss of \$847 million in 2022, after hitting its target of operating at 70 per cent of pre-pandemic passenger flights.

It carried 18 million passengers in the 12 months, up from 2.8 million in 2022. — AFP

Zara owner Inditex posts record profit

ZARA owner Inditex, the world's biggest fashion retailer, promised shareholders a record dividend on Wednesday after posting its highest-ever profits last year despite a complicated global backdrop.

The fashion giant, which has seen a strong performance on Spain's stock market over the past year, posted net profits of 5.4 billion euros (\$5.9 billion), up 30 per cent from 4.1 billion euros in 2022 which was

also a record.

The figure, which follows a solid fourth quarter, was in line with the expectations of analysts polled by financial data firm FactSet, who predicted profits of 5.36 billion euros.

Inditex has been able "to take advantage of the opportunities to keep growing profitably," said Oscar Garcia Maceiras, chief executive of the company which is based in the northwestern Galicia region. — AFP



Inditex's results are at odds with the difficulties experienced by many other fast fashion retailers, some of which have been forced to close or lay off staff in recent months. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (V.020N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BAJO VOY.NO. (V.020N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V RIVER MAS VOY.NO. (12)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V RIVER MAS VOY.NO. (12)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BAY LINE SHIPPING PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AVIONA VOY.NO. (V.2401)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V AVIONA VOY. NO. (V.2401)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S ELDER TRIUMPHANT SHIPPING LINES PTE. LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MCL 7 VOY.NO. (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MCL 7 VOY. NO. (-)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-3-2024** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIPL** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S UNIVERSE LOGISTICS INTERNATIONAL CO LTD

ROLLING UPDATES

WORLD

Hamas agrees to US-initiated Gaza ceasefire proposal: Reports

Hamas plans to send a delegation to Cairo to discuss a ceasefire deal, including the release of Israeli prisoners of children, women, and the elderly.



Pro-Palestine protesters gather at Jamaica train station in New York City on 27 January 2024. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Palestinian movement Hamas has agreed to the US-initiated proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and gradual return of displaced people, Al Arabiya reported on Tuesday, citing a source in the movement.

Hamas will send a delegation to Cairo in the next few

days to discuss the details of the ceasefire deal, the source said, adding that the movement has received an international proposal for a ceasefire, which includes the release of children, women and elderly people held in Israeli prisons.

On 7 October 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas

launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from Gaza and breached the border, killing 1,200 people and abducting around 240 others. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 31,000 people have been killed so far in the Gaza Strip, local authorities said.

On 24 November, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on 1 December. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza. — SPUTNIK

TOP NEWS

Russia to deploy troops near borders of Finland, Sweden after their NATO accession: Putin

RUSSIA will deploy its troops and strike systems near Finland and Sweden's borders following their accession to NATO, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday in an interview with local media.

Putin said the countries' decision to join NATO was based on purely political considerations, adding that "they very much wanted to be members of the Western club, under some kind of umbrella."

"This is an absolutely senseless step from the point of view of ensuring their own national interests," he said.

On Monday, Sweden officially became the 32nd NATO member, abandoning its long-standing non-aligned military policy. Finland joined the military alliance last year. These moves deprived the two countries of acting as buffer zones between the NATO alliance and Russia. — Xinhua

Germany joins operation to airdrop aid into Gaza

GERMANY said Wednesday it was joining an air bridge operation along with several other countries to drop desperately needed humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip.

The operation, initiated by Jordan, already has the participation of several other countries including France and the United States.

The defence ministry said it would deploy the German part of a joint German-French air transport squadron to participate in the mission.

The team is equipped with C-130J Hercules transport planes, said the ministry, adding that Germany's operation could begin as soon as the end of this week.

"The people in Gaza are lacking the most basic necessities. We want to do our part to ensure that they get access to food and medicine," said Defence Minister Boris Pistorius.

After one parachuted airdrop turned lethal on March 8, the minister sought to allay fears. — AFP

Japan's 1st satellite launch attempt by private firm fails

Space One Co's 18-metre-long Kairos rocket failed in its launch from Space Port Kii in Kushimoto, Wakayama Prefecture, causing a setback to the company's aspirations of becoming the first private Japanese firm to place a satellite into orbit.

A Space One Co satellite-carrying rocket exploded Wednesday moments after liftoff from a spaceport in western Japan, dealing a setback to the company's aspirations of becoming the first private Japanese firm to place a satellite into orbit.

The company's 18-metre-long Kairos rocket failed in its launch from Space Port Kii in Kushimoto, Wakayama Prefecture, Japan's first commercial

launch site. It was announced shortly after that "flight termination measures" had been safely implemented.

Local firefighters were dispatched to the scene. Police said there have been no reports of casualties so far. The rocket exploded midair around five seconds after liftoff, as fragments believed to be from the projectile were scattered around the area, and the scene was blanketed

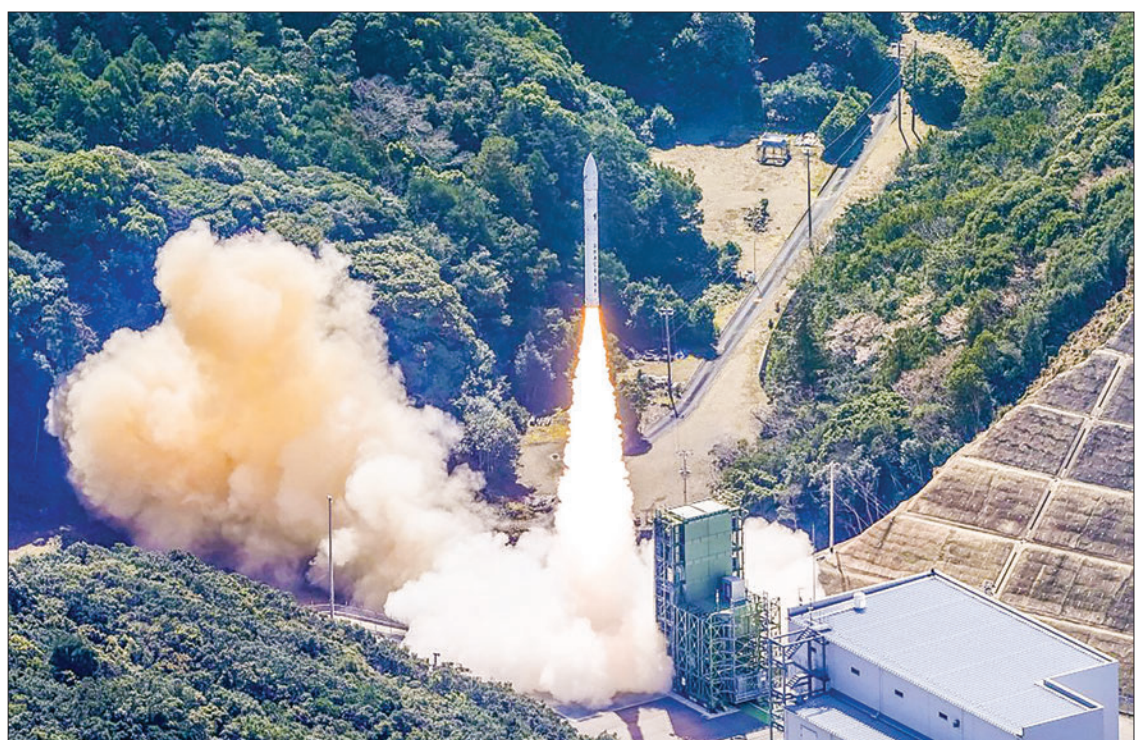


Photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter shows the Kairos rocket lifting off from Space Port Kii in Kushimoto, Wakayama Prefecture, on 13 March 2024, shortly before it exploded. **PHOTO: KYODO**

by white smoke. "We sincerely apologize for not living up to expectations," said Space One President Masakazu Toyoda at a press conference, while adding,

"Space One refuses to use the word 'failure', as we believe that we can gain new data and experiences through each and every attempt." The company said it

had set up a task force to investigate the cause of the failure. The government satellite on the rocket is believed to have been destroyed in the blast. — Kyodo

SPORTS

Australian-born pro surfer reaches Paris Olympics with Japan

Australian surfer Connor O'Leary, having switched allegiance to Japan last year, will represent his mother's homeland at the Paris Olympics this summer, joining Japan's surfing team for the Games in Tahiti.

AUSTRALIAN-BORN pro surfer Connor O'Leary is off to this summer's Paris Olympics with Japan having switched allegiances last year to his mother's homeland.

The 30-year-old, who hails from the Sydney suburb of Cronulla, was picked as Japan's

third and final representative in their men's surfing team for the Games, the Nippon Surfing Association said.

The surfing competition at the Olympics in July-August is taking place on the French Pacific island of Tahiti.

O'Leary's mother Akemi



Connor O'Leary surfing in Tahiti last year. PHOTO: AFP

Karasawa is a former Japanese surfing champion while his father is Australian.

"So excited to officially announce that I will be representing Japan at the Paris 2024

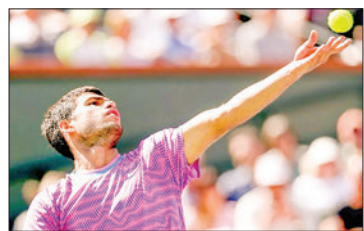
Olympics!" O'Leary told his 70,000 followers on Instagram.

He added: "Tahiti here we come!"

O'Leary, who speaks Japanese, is currently fifth of 35 com-

petitors in the World Surf League men's rankings.

He reportedly switched to representing Japan to bolster his chances of getting to the Olympics. — AFP



Carlos Alcaraz cruised into the Indian Wells Masters quarter-finals on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

Alcaraz, Sinner cruise into Indian Wells quarter-finals

DEFENDING champion Carlos Alcaraz and Italian rival Jannik Sinner remained on course for a semi-final showdown after cruising into the last eight of the ATP-WTA Indian Wells Masters on Tuesday.

Alcaraz sailed into the last eight as he took revenge on Hungary's Fabian Marozsan with a 6-3, 6-3 victory.

In-form Sinner meanwhile booked his last eight berth with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 defeat of Ben Shelton. Sinner's win was his 18th straight victory dating to late last season, leaving him three wins away from his third title of the season after winning the Australian Open and Rotterdam. — AFP

Raya's penalty heroics end debate over Arsenal No 1 spot

DAVID Raya's penalty heroics against Porto sent Arsenal through to the Champions League quarter-finals — but also settled the debate over who is the club's first-choice goalkeeper.

The Spain stopper dived full length to tip Wendell's spot kick onto his left-hand post and also saved from Galeno as Arsenal progressed to the last eight 4-2 on spot-kicks on Tuesday.

The dramatic shootout under the lights at the Emirates came with the teams locked at 1-1 on aggregate after extra time of a scrappy, tense encounter.

Arsenal forward Leandro Trossard scored in the 41st minute to level the tie after Porto had won the first leg in Portugal with a last-gasp goal.

But neither side could find a winner as a Champions League knockout match went

to penalties for the first time in eight years.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta raised eyebrows when he brought Raya to the club on a loan deal from Brentford last August to compete with established number one Aaron Ramsdale. There was a feeling in some quarters that there was no problem to fix — with England international Ramsdale a firm favourite among fans. — AFP



Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya was the hero against Porto in the Champions League last 16. PHOTO: AFP

Asian Tour to add event to help players

THE Asian Tour wants to add a lucrative event before June to help its players qualify for this summer's Paris Olympics, the head of the tour's International Series told AFP on Wednesday.

Rahul Singh was speaking ahead of this week's International Series Macau, where players are chasing a \$2 million prize fund and all-important ranking points.

Only 60 players will reach Paris 2024 and with most countries having a maximum of two places, competition is fierce before the Olympic Golf Rankings (OGR) are finalized in June.

Saudi-bankrolled LIV Golf has invested \$300 million in the Asian Tour -- which unlike LIV receives world-ranking points -- leading to the creation of the International Series.

More than 20 LIV golfers have made the short trip over from Hong Kong for this week's event at the Macau Golf and Country Club, and Singh agreed many have ranking points on their minds. — AFP



'New Bharat on way to become one of top three global economies': President Murmu in Mauritius

DURING her state visit to Mauritius, President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday declared India's advancement across all domains, emphasizing the nation's dynamic and progressive trajectory. She said that the 'New Bharat' is on the brink of joining the top three global economies, underscoring its significant strides in various sectors.

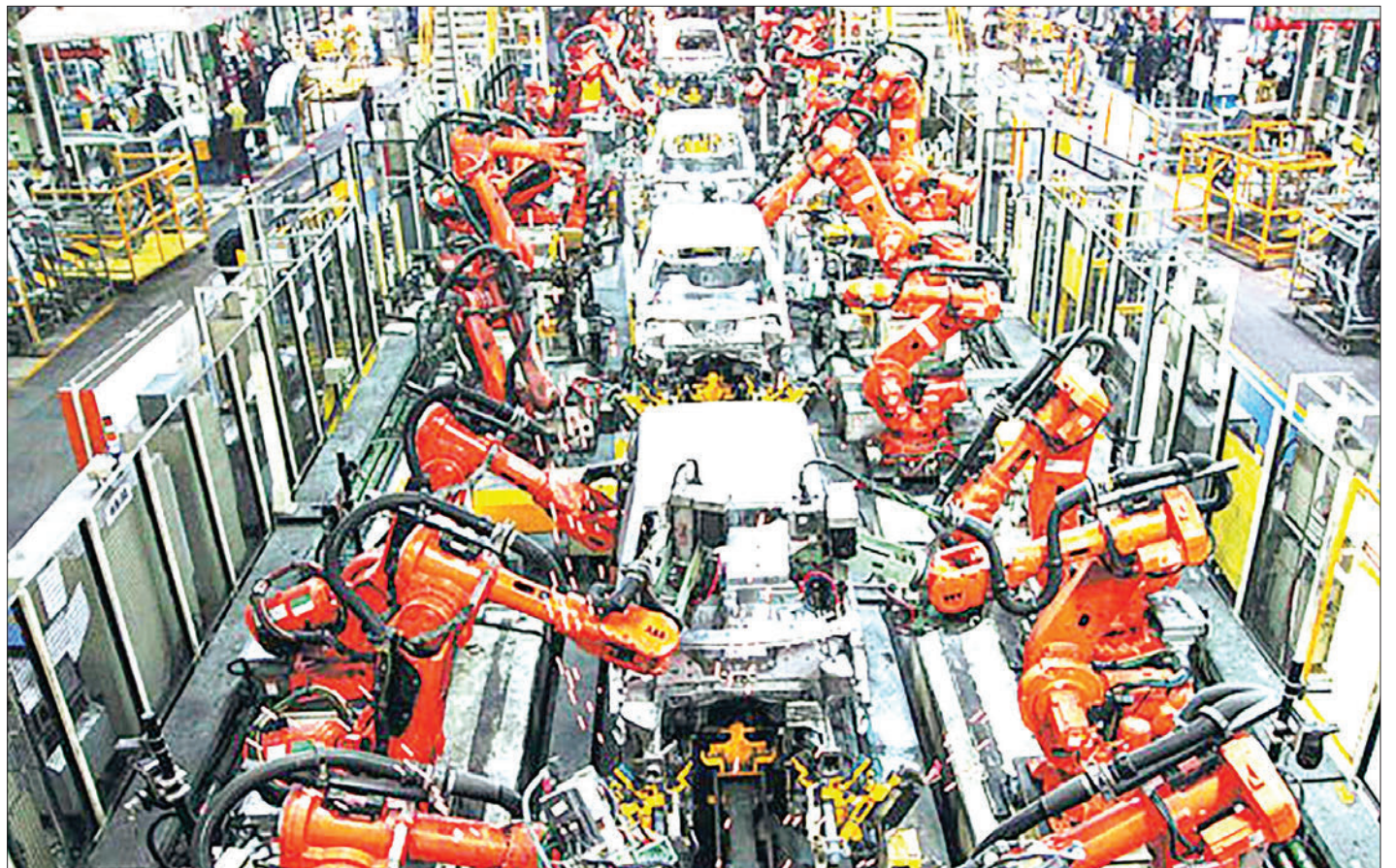
"The new Bharat of today is making strides in all spheres. It is dynamic, progressive, assertive and is firmly on the way to becoming one of the top three global economies," President Murmu said.

President Murmu, who is on a state visit to Mauritius, addressed a gathering at an event at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Port Louis and highlighted India-Mauritius historic ties and bilateral cooperation.

Reiterating the economic growth of India, the President said, "This opens up new avenues and opportunities for the youth of Mauritius. I'm pleased to announce that with the extension of OCI card eligibility to Indian origins of the 7th generation, many more young Mauritians will be able to reconnect to the land of their ancestors. India has always stood by Mauritius, and Mauritius in the past."

"Our ties are comprehensive covering every aspect of cooperation. Our decades long development partnership is a shining example of India's commitment to contribute towards the developmental journey of Mauritius and enhance the quality of life for common people." — ANI

President Droupadi Murmu, during her state visit to Mauritius, highlighted India's progress across various sectors, stating that the nation is on the verge of joining the top three global economies, underscoring its dynamic and progressive trajectory.



Tamil Nadu ranks fourth in attracting FDI in the period between October 2019 and September 2023, after Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat. **PHOTO: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/AFP/FILE**

Black box of plane injuring 50 while landing investigated in New Zealand



The LATAM Airlines Boeing 787 Dreamliner plane that suddenly lost altitude mid-flight a day earlier, dropping violently and injuring dozens of travellers, is seen on the tarmac of the Auckland International Airport on 12 March 2024. **PHOTO: AFP**

AUTHORITIES are investigating the black box of a plane that plummeted from the skies before landing in New Zealand's Auckland, injuring 50 people on board.

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner, a LATAM Airlines flight from Australia's Sydney to New Zealand's Auckland on Monday suddenly lost altitude over the Tasman Sea due to a "technical problem" which caused in-flight turbulence throwing passengers and three crew members not wearing seatbelts at the time around the cabin. "The 'black box' recordings would provide detailed evidence of any control inputs made by the crew as

well as flight parameters showing airspeed, altitude, control settings etc," Emeritus Professor David O'Hare of the Department of Psychology, University of Otago, said on Wednesday. This would show, for example, if there had been an autopilot disconnect and whether this was associated with any pilot input, O'Hare said. "There is no reason to connect this incident with other recent events involving Boeing airliners," he said. Ashok Poduval, chief executive officer of the School of Aviation at Massey University, said it is premature to draw conclusions about the safety aspects of this aircraft. — Xinhua

MUTUAL VISA-FREE TRAVEL

Singapore receives over 1.4 mln visitors in February

A total of 1.44 million visitors arrived in Singapore in February, up 50 per cent year-on-year, according to the latest statistics released by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB).

The Chinese mainland topped Singapore's visitor source in February with nearly 327,000 travellers, followed by Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, and Britain, the data showed. China and Singapore implemented mutual 30-day visa-free travel in February. The STB estimated international visitor arrivals to reach 15 to 16 million this year. — Xinhua